

July 2, 2013

The Honorable Mignon Clyburn, Acting Chairwoman
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
The Honorable Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: ConnectED initiative and e-Rate program

Dear Chairwoman Clyburn, Commissioner Rosenworcel, and Commissioner Pai:

The nation's education system is the nation's operating system and it is in need of an upgrade. Therefore, the undersigned organizations are pleased to endorse ConnectED, President Obama's plan for connecting all schools to twenty-first-century technology. We ask you to take swift action in implementing the President's call to modernize and leverage the existing e-Rate program in order to provide 99 percent of America's students with high-speed wireless internet access through next-generation broadband in schools and libraries within five years.

The mismatch between student preparation and employer demands requires the technological transformation supported by ConnectED and e-Rate. More than 20 percent of the nation's students do not graduate from high school on time, if at all, and by 2020, U.S. companies will have fewer than half the number of qualified applicants for the 123 million high-skill jobs they will need to fill. Although there have been improvements over time, the pace of academic progress must be significantly accelerated. ConnectED and e-Rate will help support the changes needed in today's classrooms to ensure that the United States maintains its competitive edge in the twenty-first-century global economy.

The availability and effective use of technology is a vital component of the reform that is necessary to strengthen the nation's schools. Yet too many schools lack the infrastructure to benefit from the advances in technology that have revolutionized the way in which much of the world operates. Results from a 2010 FCC survey of e-Rate-funded schools showed that the broadband connections of nearly 80 percent of respondents did not fully meet their needs.ⁱ This must change in order for students to benefit from the promise of technology.

Digital learning opportunities, including blended learning, allow for personalized and engaging teaching and learning. High-speed broadband can literally open the world to the nation's students by increasing the availability of high-quality instruction, expanding access to rigorous course work, and providing additional opportunities for supporting student success in and beyond the classroom. Moreover, the implementation of college- and career-ready standards and aligned assessments—now driving reform in all fifty states and the District of Columbia—is largely dependent upon technology that is not yet readily available in far too many school districts across the country.

The ConnectED initiative and the expansion and modernization of the e-Rate program will help transform the technological infrastructure in the nation's classrooms and libraries, allowing schools and communities to provide students with a twenty-first-century education. We, the undersigned, stand ready to support the FCC at this historic moment to connect all schools to the digital age.

Sincerely,

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| Afterschool Alliance | NAACP |
| Alliance for Excellent Education | NALEO Educational Fund |
| American Association of School Administrators | National Association of Elementary School Principals |
| American Association of School Librarians | National Association of Secondary School Principals |
| American Federation of Teachers | National Association of State Boards of Education |
| American School Counselor Association | National Association of State Directors of Special Education |
| Association for Career and Technical Education | National Conference on Teaching and America's Future |
| Association for Middle Level Education | National Council for Agricultural Education |
| Association of Educational Service Agencies | National Council of Teachers of English |
| Center for American Progress | National Education Association |
| Consortium for School Networking | National FFA Organization |
| Council for Exceptional Children | National Indian Education Association |
| Council of Chief State School Officers | National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition |
| Democrats for Education Reform | National Rural Education Association |
| Digital Promise | National School Boards Association |
| Flipped Learning Network | National School Public Relations Association |
| Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, NC State University College of Education | National Youth Leadership Council |
| International Association for K-12 Online Learning | One Economy Corp. |
| International Society for Technology in Education | Parents for Public Schools |
| KnowledgeWorks | Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers |
| League of United Latin American Citizens | Partnership for 21st Century Skills |
| Learning First Alliance | Project Tomorrow |
| Learning Forward | |

SAS Institute Inc.

TechSmith Corporation

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

The Learning Accelerator

Software & Information Industry Association

Young Adult Library Services Association

State Educational Technology Directors Association

ⁱ Federal Communications Commission, *2010 E-Rate Program and Broadband Usage Survey: Report* (Washington, DC: Author, January 2011), http://transition.fcc.gov/010511_Eratereport.pdf (accessed June 7, 2013).